

REAGAN RULES TO FREE BRADLEY

BY STEPHEN JAFFE

Governor Ronald Reagan became the first public official to free a man legally accused with the crime of unlawful conspiracy to assassinate President John F. Kennedy. The man is free without having had a trial to determine his guilt or innocence.

On November 8, the Governor ruled to deny the State of Louisiana's request to extradite Edgar Eugene Bradley, of 12208 Emelita St., North Hollywood. The ruling came eleven months after the indictment was filed by District Attorney Jim Garrison of New Orleans.

Following the issuance of the "at large warrant" on December 20, 1967, an extradition request containing witnesses' affidavits was approved by the Louisiana Attorney General, Jack P. Gremillion and signed by Lt. Governor C. C. Aycock acting on behalf of John J. McKeithen, Governor of Louisiana.

Today Bradley is free. Governor Reagan's legal affairs secretary, Edwin Meese III (who handles all legal advisory for Reagan since the Governor's background is theatrical and not legal) ruled Bradley would not be sent to New Orleans to stand trial "based upon insufficient showing by Louisiana that Bradley had been in the state between August 1963 and November 22, 1963," when the alleged conspiracy took place.

However, in this apparent last round of Bradley's fight to keep out of a New Orleans courtroom, confusion and conflicting reports abound.

When Bradley presented affidavits at his extradition hearing on June 26th of this year, he claimed that at the time of the assassination that he was in El Paso, Texas. This statement was widely reported. However, the Los Angeles Times report by Jerry Cohen, staff writer, last Saturday said, "Ever since Garrison's charge December 20, Bradley has steadfastly maintained that he had no knowledge of the assassination, knew none of the others implicated by Garrison and was in his North Hollywood home on November 22, 1963 when Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas."

In a filmed interview broadcast on KABC-TV (Nov. 8, 1968) on the Baxter Ward News, Bradley further confused the stability of his alibi when he said, "Well, I have numerous witnesses to verify that I was in Dallas, Texas, arriving at 12:55, just shortly after the assassination had taken place . . ." At another point in the interview he places himself in El Paso.

District Attorney Garrison had charged that Bradley was in Dallas at the time of the shooting.

In all fairness to Mr. Bradley these two reports were probably a combination of poor reporting by Mr. Cohen and a slip of the tongue by Bradley himself but they serve to cast doubt on the validity of Governor Reagan's ruling that he should not be extradited for trial. Without such a trial such statements cannot be thoroughly examined.

Adversary proceeding, the basic facet of jurisprudence which insures the probability of justice in American law, is forever absent in the case of the murder of President John Kennedy. This process allows for the counsel for the defense and prosecution to cross-examine witnesses and evidence. Such debate is considered the most effective way to challenge and destroy falsehoods and uncover the truth. Since Bradley will not stand trial we may never know what would have been the evidence in the Louisiana case against him. The evidence and the witnesses will not be

subjected to adversary proceeding.

The Warren Commission refused to allow an attorney who was retained to represent the interests of the accused, to act as an adversary to the members of the Commission and their legal aides. The Commission, in summary, sought to determine Lee Harvey Oswald's guilt and acted the role of the prosecutor. The result was a biased and unfounded report not truthfully reflective of the evidence. Most attorneys who are familiar with the Warren Commission's work, feel that the multitudinous inaccuracies in the findings of the Commission could never have resulted had they incorporated adversary proceeding.

Bradley's attorney, George Jensen, a former FBI agent, presented the Warren Report with other evidence in defense of Bradley at his extradition hearing. He based much of his argument on the findings of the Warren Commission that Oswald was the lone assassin, and that there was no conspiracy. Jensen said if California decided to extradite Bradley it would, in effect, be questioning "The Warren Commission, the FBI, the Army, Navy, Air Force and all the investigative agencies of the U. S. Government."

Meese told Jensen and Bradley that the state's (California) decision would not reflect on the Report. Meese further explained that the decision would be based on the "legal sufficiency" of the extradition papers from Louisiana.

In breaking down the case as it was evaluated by the Governor's office, the District Attorney presented affidavits of Roger Craig, a Dallas Deputy Sheriff at the time of the assassination and Max Gonzales, a New Orleans court clerk. In addition Garrison stated in the request

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that his office had "other evidence" that Bradley discussed "in detail" with others, "measures to accomplish the assassination."

Former Deputy Sheriff Roger Craig's sworn statement said that he positively identified Bradley as the man whom he had spoken to in front of the Texas School Book Depository just minutes after the shooting. Craig said that Bradley, "represented himself as a Secret Service man" as he mingled with Dallas police at the murder site. Craig submitted a statement to the Warren Commission of other occurrences which he encountered. But the Commission dismissed his observations because they were not

consistent with the Commission's view of Oswald's movements just after the shooting. Craig had served as a deputy sheriff for eight years and had received the Man of the Year award in 1960 for the capture of a most wanted criminal. The Sheriff of Dallas County, Bill Decker, later fired Craig.

The affidavit of Max Gonzales submitted by the District Attorney said that he had identified Bradley as having conferred at a lake front airport in New Orleans, on different occasions between June 1 and August 31, 1963. On these occasions Gonzales said that he observed Bradley talking with David W. Ferrie, one of those named by Garrison as having participated in the conspiracy.

Bradley's attorney submitted a file of approximately 62 exhibits to show that Bradley was in California between June 1 and August 31, 1963, and also to support Bradley's contention that he was in El Paso, Texas, having just completed a bus trip from Tulsa, Oklahoma, during and after the time of the assassination.

The chronology appeared to prove Bradley's story but without proper cross-examination it is impossible to say how the exhibits would have held their credibility.

For example, in attempting to support Bradley's story of his whereabouts between November 21 and November 23, 1963, he offered a sworn deposition by himself that he had boarded a bus at 7:16 PM bound for Oklahoma City. He had, according to his deposition, visited a friend in Tulsa. He submitted a bus schedule as evidence of his trip. But the schedule would in no way link him to the bus trip and the deposition, since it is his own, is not corroborative evidence but merely an explanation of that which he alleges he did as against the charges.

On May 3, 1963, Mark Lane wrote in the Los Angeles Free Press newspaper about a letter which he had intercepted from the particular friend in Tulsa, Oklahoma whom Bradley visited. Lane said that Bradley had addressed communication to a young woman in the form of an affidavit he had prepared for her to sign. "She was to swear," wrote Lane, "that Bradley had been with her, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, on November 21 and November 22, 1963. He thus sought to have her offer an alibi for him for the day of the assassination. She refused to sign the affidavit, however, stating that it was false, as she had not seen him on November 22. Her daily diary, a copy of which I (Lane) have been able to secure, reveals that she saw Bradley on November 20, 1963 and not on the 22nd."

Lane also told of another letter which he had secured from the lady which Bradley had written to her some time after the assassination but long before he had been indicted for conspiracy.

In the letter Bradley admitted, according to Lane's article, that he knew "facts about the case that the public will never know about." "You can be sure that Oswald was not the only one involved," Bradley wrote.

In a telephone interview with Charles Edwards, a free lance reporter from U.C.L.A., Bradley admitted to having written the letter and saying "some of those things, which probably everyone has said at some time or another" but he added that Mark Lane had "twisted" the truth about some of his allegations.

Bradley's evidence at his hearing continued with a deposition by his aunt and another bus schedule. The aunt's deposition said that Bradley had telephoned her on Nov. 21st, and told her that he was just passing through and wouldn't have time to visit her. Again the schedule is not evidence of having been on the bus and the telephone call might have been made from anywhere in the country.

After that Bradley said that he traveled all night on

the bus to El Paso, Texas where he arrived at 12:55 P.M. There has been a controversy about this point because Bradley said that he noticed the flags in El Paso to be at half-staff and was told at the station that the President was dead.

The controversy is about the time because at 12:55 PM, Dallas time, or Central Time, the President had not even been pronounced dead. This took place at 1:00 PM, Dallas time, (see VOLUME XVII, page 3, Commission Exhibit 392 of the Hearings Before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy) and the announcement to the press wasn't made until 1:36 PM, Dallas time. Several almanacs list El Paso as being in the same time zone as Dallas which would have made it impossible for Bradley's story to check out but a check with weather bureaus and radio stations in El Paso reveals that the city is now and was then on Mountain time, one hour earlier than Dallas' Central time. Therefore that part of Bradley's story is not in conflict with what could have transpired on November 22, 1963.

Bradley submitted an affidavit of Rev. Hobart W. Bennett saying that he received a call from Bradley shortly after 12:55 PM when Bradley was to arrive in El Paso. But the telephone call which Reverend Bennett received does not prove Bradley's presence in that city.

Thereafter, Bradley said that he went to the county recorder where he conducted business for his employer Dr. Carl McIntire. The business was regarding property and Bradley submitted to the Hearing records which bear his handwriting, an expert said, according to another affidavit. In a trial the handwriting expert would be cross-examined and the records would be examined by the prosecution.

Bradley said that he stayed in a hotel in El Paso that night and submitted the hotel records showing his registration (El Paso's Knox Hotel, Room 207), deposition from an employee and from the handwriting expert. He then traveled to Anthony, Texas where he had more business and offered as supporting evidence affidavits of persons with whom he said he talked and the bus tickets between El Paso and Anthony, Texas. In addition to the fact that in a trial this evidence would be challenged, even if it were established as legitimate evidence it would not necessarily prove that Bradley could not have been in Dallas earlier that day because Dallas is about one-hour-and-a-half, by small plane, to El Paso.

What should not go unnoticed about this point is that for Bradley's trip from El Paso to Anthony, Texas in the afternoon he submitted actual bus tickets. But for the crucial trip from Tulsa, Oklahoma to El Paso, during which time Kennedy was killed, Bradley submitted a bus schedule. The schedule is by no means a positive indication of his presence on the bus during this time—the time at which Garrison alleges he was in Dallas.

None of the evidence presented was cross-examined by anyone at the extradition hearing although the California Attorney General's office was there to represent the interests of the State of Louisiana.

In another development in the case which was brought to the attention of the Governor's office, Edwin Meese

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III, conferred with Loran Hall. Hall had been subpoenaed by Garrison as a material witness in the investigation of the President's assassination. Hall fought extradition and won but after speaking with investigators for Garrison's office he decided that he would go to New Orleans to testify. Hall had originally been afraid to go because of "all the crazy things" he had read about Garrison in the press. He had cited the Los Angeles Times editorial of December 28, 1967, which said "No man, regardless of his background should be railroaded to another jurisdiction simply to satisfy the whim of a headline-hunting district attorney," and the editorial termed Garrison's investigation "bizarre." The irresponsibility of that editorial had served to undermine the legal process to which Garrison adhered in attempting to subpoena witnesses. The Times opinions were not unique amidst the antagonistic press which Garrison usually receives.

Hall's conference with Meese was to convey his experiences to the Governor's office because of their relevance to Bradley's case. He told Meese of meetings which he had attended in Los Angeles in 1963 where he had delivered speeches regarding his anti-Castro activities and sought the support of those present.

Hall said that Bradley had been present at at least one of the meetings where the suggestion of assassinating the President had been discussed. "It was suggested," Hall said, that "we ought to get up an assassination team and go take care of Kennedy." Hall made it clear that neither he nor Bradley had made the suggestion but that both had heard it.

Hall stated that the meetings took place at the home of Clinton G. Wheat, also known as George Clinton Wheat, of 233 S. Lafayette Park Place, Los Angeles. Records showed that Wheat had owned the home in 1963. FBI records revealed that Wheat had a police record and had been imprisoned in Louisiana in the 1940's for murder. Wheat was also the head of a California organization formed in 1962 by a Ku Klux Klan chairman, James R. Venable.

Also present at that meeting, according to Hall, was Dr. Stanley L. Drennan, who resides now in the Hollywood area.

Drennan was investigated by the FBI for the Warren Commission in December, 1963. The FBI received a report from a Captain Robert K. Brown that he was present in Drennan's North Hollywood home when Drennan told him that "the National States Rights Party needed a group of young men to get rid of Kennedy, the Cabinet and all members of Americans for Democratic Action . . ." (See Hearings before the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy Commission Exhibit No. 3063).

Bradley denied that he had attended the meeting with Hall or had heard him speak but said that he had attended a "Communism lecture" there in 1963 given by a former FBI agent. He added that he had been invited to speak there himself. Bradley said that he spoke there in "either August or July of 1963." Bradley said that he believed Hall was a liar and that Hall was conspiring with someone

associated with Garrison.

After Hall testified in New Orleans Garrison subpoenaed G. Clinton Wheat on May 13, 1968. It was discovered that between the time that Hall had disclosed the 1963 meeting publicly and the date of the issuance of the subpoena for Wheat, Wheat had moved, his house then burned down, and Wheat himself fled on foot from the mountain cabin where Sheriff's deputies arrived in an attempt to serve the subpoena. Wheat's wife first gave the Shasta County Sheriff's Captain Harold Cramer a phony name but later admitted that she and her husband had been staying at the cabin. She said her husband left the cabin walking, without luggage a week earlier.

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